

Background: PM_{2.5} NAAQS
Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Area

In 1997, EPA established annual and daily National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for PM_{2.5} for the first time. The Clean Air Act (CAA) requires EPA to review the particulate pollution standards every five years, which resulted in EPA's decision to revise the daily NAAQS for PM_{2.5} in 2006 and in 2012 to revise the annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS.

In 2005, EPA designated the Washington, DC-MD-VA area (which includes Wheaton in Montgomery County, Maryland) as nonattainment under the 1997 annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS. In 2012, EPA issued a determination that the area had (based on the most recently available 2007-2009 air quality monitoring data) attained the NAAQS by its applicable attainment date. Although the area continues to monitor in attainment of the 1997 annual NAAQS, it remains designated nonattainment until the state meets the statutory requirements for redesignation to attainment. When EPA finalized designations under the revised 2006 daily PM_{2.5} NAAQS in 2012, the Washington, DC-MD-VA area was not designated nonattainment. EPA has not finalized designations for the 2012 annual PM_{2.5} NAAQS.

Upon designation of an area as nonattainment, affected states have a number of years (per timeframes established under the CAA) to meet the revised NAAQS. States may rely on emission reductions from measures they adopt, as well as from federal measures already in place, to reduce pollution to help them meet the standards. Emission reductions from EPA and states rules already approved are expected to allow the vast majority of areas to meet the revised PM_{2.5} standards. Emission reductions rules include clean diesel rules for vehicles and fuels, rules to reduce pollution and transported pollution from power plants and other major industrial sources, locomotives, and marine vessels among others.